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SUBJECT: CZECH POULTRY FARM HIT BY AVIAN FLU FOR THE FIRST TIME

REF: PRAGUE 370

¶1. Summary and comment: The Czech Government reported an outbreak of avian flu June 20 at a turkey farm in Tisova, Pardubice Region (130km east of Prague.) Laboratory tests revealed that the birds were infected with the highly dangerous H5N1 virus. Strict veterinary and sanitary measures are currently in place to ensure the outbreak is contained. The quarantine measures will be maintained for 30 days to ensure no new infections are discovered. CR has a well-documented pandemic plan in place (reftel). Its network of hygienic and veterinary stations and rescue agencies is well prepared to deal with these smaller outbreaks. Czech authorities took immediate action, adopted and enforced strict preventive measures and minimized the impact of this infection. End summary and comment.

Protective and sanitary measures adopted

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¶2. Minister of Agriculture Petr Gandalovic publicly confirmed on June 21 that the EU had been notified about the outbreak and that the situation is under control. No poultry from this farm is available in the retail food market since the birds had only half the required weight. Gandalovic does not expect any limitation of exports of Czech poultry to the EU in general.

¶3. Strict veterinary and sanitary rules have been implemented: All poultry of the affected farm and in the whole village will be destroyed by June 23. Two levels of quarantine have been established: a 3-kilometer protection zone around the farm where all poultry is currently being examined, and a 10-kilometer radius surveillance zone where no poultry and eggs can be removed, and where poultry must be kept closed-in for veterinarians to carry out regular inspections. Minister of Health Tomas Julinek explained that these measures are the same as those taken in response to the 2006 Avian Flu cases involving wild swans.

¶4. An estimated 350,000 birds are in the 10-kilometer surveillance zone. Bird exhibitions and markets are banned, dogs must be walked on a leash, and any bird found dead in the wider zone comprising the Pardubice region and part of the Hradec Kralove region must be reported to the local authorities. If no new cases of infection are found, the measures will be discontinued after 30 days (July 19, 2007).

Source of infection

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¶5. Wild birds are primary suspects as the source of infection because the farm used straw stored in the open air for litter. This will be verified by further analysis. According to veterinary experts, turkeys are particularly susceptible to infection but for safety, all poultry in the village (some 1,000 hens and geese) will be destroyed. Previously, H5N1 virus was only found in CR in several dead wild swans. The first was found on March 20, 2006 at

Hluboka nad Vltavou and the last case was reported on May 12, 2006 at Kostice near Breclav.

Military steps in to help

¶6. In addition to veterinarians, firemen and police, a special military rescue battalion from Olomouc responded to Tisova to help stop the infection from spreading. Army Chief of Staff Vlastimil Pícek said only the military has the necessary technical means to disinfect people who move about the area, decontaminate automobiles leaving it, and destroy the infected birds.

Tamiflu administered

¶7. As a preventive measure, Chief hygienist Michael Vit decided to administer Tamiflu to the people who worked in the farm, vets who discovered the infection and the military and firemen brigades working in the area.